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COCKPIT SECURITY: TERRORIST TECHNIQUES LOOKED FAMILIAR TO EX-PILOT AMERICA PREPARES

DAVE HIRSCHMAN; Staff

The terrorists who used U.S. airliners as suicide weapons had a blueprint for their mayhem.

It was shown to them --- and the rest of the world --- on April 7, 1994, when Auburn Calloway, a FedEx flight engineer, attempted to commandeer a DC-10 in flight and crash it into the company's package sorting center in Memphis. Calloway, then 42, was willing to perish in the attack --- but not for religious reasons.

He faced a disciplinary hearing the next day that might have ended his flying career and, before he was grounded, he wanted to use a FedEx plane to obliterate the company he believed had treated him unfairly. Calloway also wanted his family to collect a \$1.3 million life insurance policy.

"What he did was so cunning, so brazen and so meaningless that I figured nothing like it would ever happen again," said Jim Tucker, a FedEx captain who flew as co-pilot on the plane Calloway attempted to seize.

"Then, when I saw pictures of the World Trade Center burning, I was in shock. I was in absolute shock, but I wasn't surprised," added Tucker, now living near Dothan, Ala. "Everyone saw how close Calloway had come to accomplishing his goal, and there were no additional security measures to prevent something else like it." Similar techniques

As Calloway had done seven years earlier, the Sept. 11 terrorists:

- > Chose a clear, cloudless day for their crimes.
- > Selected transcontinental domestic flights.
- > Assaulted crews soon after takeoff while the planes were full of fuel and close to their intended targets.
- > Used simple hand tools to dispatch the crews.

Even though Calloway was an expert marksman, he used a 20-ounce framing

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hammer as his main weapon. Once he took control of the fully fueled, 500,000-pound jet, there was no doubt Calloway could find and smash his target. Calloway was a former Navy pilot who had thousands of hours of flying experience, and plunging a jet into FedEx's 2-million-square-foot nerve center would have been simple for him.

As the three pilots aboard FedEx Flight 705 ascended through 18,000 feet, Calloway entered the cockpit and struck flight engineer Andy Peterson from behind with a pair of crushing blows. The impact fractured Peterson's skull and severed the temporal artery in his head so that, without medical intervention, he would have bled to death in two hours. Next, he struck Tucker with enough force to drive the hammer into his brain, paralyzing him on the right side of his body. Finally, he struck the captain, David Sanders, with blows that severed his right ear, lacerated his scalp and dislocated his jaw.

Even though the pilots were trained to cooperate with hijackers, the FedEx crew recognized they had to fight back.

Tucker used his responsive left hand to grab the control yoke and roll the airplane on its back, bouncing Calloway off the ceiling. Peterson and Sanders released their seat belt harnesses and dove at the intruder. The plane's wild gyrations lifted them off the floor and they floated out of the cockpit, through a narrow passageway and into the wide galley area.

Calloway was a martial arts expert, but Peterson and Sanders managed to pull the hammer out of his hand and use it against him. Sanders, then 48, smashed Calloway in the head as hard as he could, fracturing the attacker's forehead.

The pilots called for Tucker to put the plane on autopilot and help them restrain the attacker. For several minutes, the cockpit was vacant.

Sanders told his fellow pilots to keep Calloway pinned on the floor while he went forward and tried to land the plane. The critically injured pilots were losing strength, however, while Calloway seemed to recover.

"I won't fight anymore," Calloway kept telling them. "Just let me up. I can't breathe."

Despite those words, the three men fought savagely and continuously for 30 minutes while Sanders rushed to get the plane back on the ground in Memphis. Alone in the cockpit, he brought the DC-10 to a stop on the runway, even though it was 20 tons over its maximum allowable landing weight.

A year later, Calloway was convicted of attempted aircraft piracy and sentenced to life in prison. Today, he's an inmate at the federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pa.

Urge to speak out

Sanders, Tucker and Peterson suffered such severe head injuries that their flying careers ended on that day. None of them was able to return to the cockpit, and for seven years they declined virtually all requests to speak publicly about

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their ordeal. But the terrorists attacks on Sept. 11 convinced Tucker, now living in Headland, Ala., a Dothan suburb, to push for greater cockpit security.

"The terrorists saw how easy it was to get weapons onto a plane, dispatch the crew and steer it into a target," he said. "The fact that it was all so simple really bothers me. Truthfully, it was probably as simple for the terrorists to do what they did in 2001 as it was for Auburn Calloway in 1994 --- and that's just not right."

Tucker wants impenetrable barriers between airline cockpits and cabins, and he favors allowing pilots to carry guns.

Airline crews also must prepare themselves to face threats from suicidal hijackers that their current training doesn't contemplate.

"The actions they've got to take run counter to all the training they've ever had," Tucker said. "Crews are taught to cooperate, stall, placate. That won't work anymore, and everyone knows it."

As ghastly as the images of the planes striking the World Trade Center were, however, Tucker said the struggle that must have taken place aboard United Flight 93, the plane that went down in Pennsylvania, replays in his mind the most.

Passengers using cellphones learned that other hijacked jets had slammed into the World Trade Center that morning, and a group of them decided to fight back while the plane was still airborne. That jet crashed into a farm field before it reached its intended target in the Washington area.

"We'll never know exactly what took place aboard that airplane," Tucker said. "But there was obviously an intense struggle, and you can't imagine the brutality of that kind of close quarters fight to the death unless you've lived through something like it."

"It's appropriate that those passengers died in Pennsylvania because, as Lincoln said at Gettysburg, they gave their last full measure of devotion. They died for something greater than themselves, and we owe them a debt we can never repay."

Staff writer Dave Hirschman is the author of "Hijacked --- The real story of the heroes of Flight 705," published in 1997 by Dell Books

Photo

Jim Tucker helped repel an attempted hijacking of a FedEx plane in 1994. He urges tighter cockpit security and says pilots must be retrained to deal with such threats. / SONJA REVELLS / Special

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